

The Declaration of War

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[0 : 0 0] Bibles turn to Genesis chapter 3, Genesis chapter 3, just before 8 a.m. on Sunday, December the 7th, 1941, near Honolulu, Hawaii, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese.

A one-ton bomb hit the USS Arizona battleship, smashed through the deck, and landed in the ammunition magazine. The ship immediately exploded, sank, and killed a thousand men that were trapped inside. Nine battleships were harbored there, and all of them sustained significant damage.

That many more ships were damaged as well, along with 300 airplanes. More than 2,000 people died from that attack. Previously, before that, America had played a supportive role for the Allies, but things changed that day. It was devastating, but thankfully, all of the aircraft carriers, which had become the most potent machine for the military, were out to sea. They were not harbored there. The submarine docks were not hit either, and the U.S. Navy rebounded quickly. The next day, President Franklin Roosevelt declared in a speech that was originally written to say, a day which will live in world history, changed the words to say, a day which will live in infamy.

He declared war on Japan. Three days later, Hitler responded by declaring war on the United States, and we were fully engaged in both the European theater as well as the Pacific theater for the next four years. That horrible war ended with atomic bombs, and 400,000 American troops did, along with millions of other worldwide troops and civilians. It forever marked our country, and less than 1% of those greatest generation veterans that fought in that war are living today.

For the last 30 years, I have spent much of my ministry bearing many of my friends that fought for our country in that war. We ought to thank God for their sacrifice and their service.

[2 : 4 9] Thank God that war is over. But there is a larger, longer lasting, more unseen, and more devastating war that rages on. And in the passage that we look at today in Genesis chapter 3, we see a declaration of war. Adam and Eve had sinned against God, deceived and seduced by the evil one in the form of a snake.

Blamed, blame was tossed around, but God addressed all of them. And I want you to notice God's words to Satan, that old snake in the grass. Notice what he says in Genesis chapter 3, verse 14 and 15.

The Lord God said to the serpent, because you've done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field. On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Sin is like an onion. You peel one part of it back and there's another. And layer after layer, it just continues to the point it'll make you cry. I want you to begin to see in this passage this morning, the layers of our sinful conflict. Before the earth was created, before God made us from the dust, there was conflict in heaven. And that conflict caused a war. And the influence of that war spread when the serpent crawled through the garden and pressured a couple into breaking the only command that we know that they had. And that, my friend, was the first peeling back of the onion of sin.

[4 : 59] It exposed us to a cosmic sinful battle that was already raging. And it grew from that day and it's kept going throughout history. It spreads the conflict like a wildfire. If you want to understand what's going on in this world, go right back to Genesis chapter 3 because this is the foundation of where all of it came from.

We see the ramifications of the conflict that continues on. This first layer is the devil is trying to cripple humankind. It's what he wanted to do in Genesis chapter 3, what he wants to do today. It becomes obvious as God first looks at the serpent. And he tells him that he's cursed and that he shall crawl on his belly and eat dust. Now, does that mean that he changed the way the snake got around? Many believe so.

I've seen some pictures along the way of what the serpent may have looked like before. Let me tell you something, friend. When I see that, I already don't like snakes. One of the reasons I'm Baptist is because we don't mess with snakes. Did God change the way that he made snakes? I don't know.

The passage seems to point to that. Regardless, the point is the same. You will crawl on your belly.

You will bottom out. You will never win. Even when it seems like you're winning, you're not. Now, folks, if you hadn't picked up on it yet, he's not only talking to the snake, he's talking to us.

[6 : 50] What he said for the snake is the same truth for us. And what he's talking about is the cost of sin. Old gospel song the cathedral sang said this, Sin will take you farther than you want to go, slowly but wholly taking control. Sin will leave you longer than you want to stay.

Sin will cost you far more than you want to pay. Sin never gives all that it promises. Sin never gives all that it's like an onion.

Sin never gives all that it's like an onion. You just peel another layer. Temptation builds hopes that are false. And they're made up of lies. I like what Micah, chapter 7, verse 17, Micah said, the prophet speaks about the sinful neighboring nations of Judah.

And he says, They shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth. Now listen, the snake is the most crafty, one of the most beautiful creatures that God ever made.

What ought to be a beautiful, admired creature is now a hissing, slithering, dangerous one. He crawls on his belly, never able to rise.

[8 : 06] He eats the dust. He never rises out of the muck and the mire of the dirt of life. And so it is with the horrible devastation of sin. Donald Gray Barnhouse is a strong preacher and writer of yesteryear.

And he said this in explaining this passage. He said, To eat dust is to no defeat. The enemy will always reach for his desires and fall just short of them.

There will never be continuous aspiration, but, excuse me, there will be continuous aspiration, but never any attainment. The old rock group said, Another one bites the dust.

And we know what they meant. Because it means the proud will be humiliated. It means the admired will be the most hated.

It means the crafty will be the cursed. It is the cost of sin. But it also speaks of the conflict of sin.

[9 : 13] We are made to fellowship together with God. We are to be united in that purpose. And due to sin, there's conflict.

There's not only conflict with God, there's conflict with each other. There's conflict. When sin came, an enmity between man and the serpent came.

Enmity speaks of a deep-seated ill will. It speaks of an ongoing battle of hatred that takes place. And that surely speaks to an ongoing battle between humans and serpents.

I'm going to test that. But more importantly and more deeply than that, it speaks of a war of the offspring of women and the evil one. Now, to be clear about something, Satan literally does not have any offspring.

He didn't create the demons. They were angels. Like he, we talked about this a few weeks ago. Remember, they have now fallen. He didn't create them. They influence people into being sinners.

[10 : 18] And they become the children of influence of the evil one when they fall for such sin. Sometimes false and empty religion can be the same thing. Jesus called the Pharisees a brood of vipers.

In other words, an offspring of snakes. And what he's saying is that false religion is saying they act like one of the devil of sorts. They're too much under his influence in the words in which they say.

That's the kind of war that's raging. That's the kind of war that's happening. The battle of sin is fighting against God. But it's played out by the evil one influencing the children of God.

And Satan and his army work hard to draw us away from God in such a way that it is in fact war. And verse 15 is a declaration of that war.

It is the conflict that we will have with sin. Satan is biting at our heels. And we too often are poisoned by that. Satan has way too much influence on us.

[11 : 27] It's a war. I had a man ask me the other day, why can't I consistently walk in the spirit of God? I mean, I pray and I read my Bible and I read devotional works and I still struggle.

With that sinful pattern. I do the things that I don't want to do. When he said that, I said, you know who you sound like?

You sound like the Apostle Paul. Romans 7 verse 15 said, for I don't understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate.

Have you been there? Don't look at me like that. We've all been there. We're guilty of it. It's a war that we're fighting. And when Paul says that, he's talking about this battle here.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was our 34th president, but also served as the supreme commander in World War II. And he said this about war, and it's fitting about the spiritual war in which we face.

[12 : 34] He said, I hate war as only a soldier who has lived in it can. Only as one who has seen its brutality and its stupidity.

When I read that, I thought that's exactly how I feel. That's exactly how I feel. Sinful battles in people's lives are filled with brutality and stupidity.

That's what we're fighting. Satan wins way too many battles in our lives, but he knows, and this may be why he wears us down so, he knows that he will not win the war.

You can read the back of the book. He's already read it. He knows that he won't win the war, so he'll bruise us. So he'll scar us.

So he'll wound us. He will strike our heel. There'll be a conflict. But the passage also speaks, and thank God I ain't got to stop there, of the conquest of sin.

[13 : 45] Because sin is to be conquered. In the midst of our sinful struggles, and in the conflicts of our sinful nature, we must never forget who felt the real pain.

For the heel that the devil struck due to our sin was Christ. More than we have to face, he faced it all on our behalf.

Many children of dear women will fight the battle of sin, but Jesus Christ has won the battle. It's only been won by one.

I don't want you to miss the prophecy here in verse 15, and it's easy to do, but I want to point it out to you because it's kind of odd. It's an odd passage. It says the offspring of the woman, but if you literally look at that passage, in the original language, it really says the seed of a woman.

It's translated offspring in many translations, but it speaks of the seed of a woman. Now, normally in Scripture, when you see the word offspring, that seed, it always speaks to a man because Abraham's offspring, for instance, is often spoken of as if it was his seed.

[15 : 08] That's the word that's used there when it speaks of Abraham's offspring. And just a really quick lesson in biology because I am scientifically challenged is the man provides the seed and the woman provides the egg.

But here, the passage says, it is the seed of a woman. Why? Why? My friend, this is the first prophecy of the virgin-born Christ.

This is the first prophetic proclamation of the gospel. Now, listen, it ain't gonna be long before we see more, but this is the first one that we see here.

Satan's efforts are rough on us, but it's not near as strong and rough as it was for the Lord Jesus.

He was hated by church leaders. He was mocked by those that followed him just days earlier that followed him, were fed by him. Some of those very folks mocked him.

[16 : 21] He was nearly beat to death. He hung in agony on a Roman cross that took his respect away, took his dignity away, took his life away.

It was a rough strike of the heel, but it was only a strike. It was not a defeat, for his death was nothing more.

Christ's death was nothing more but a strike, because we're gonna celebrate in a month. His resurrection was the crushing of the head. Now, oh, the body of the snake still slithers.

Chickens run without their heads for a little bit. Snakes will slither around headless for a time. I'm still gonna run from them. A final declaration of defeat will come when the Lord returns, but I want you to know today, because of the cross of Christ, he breaks the power of canceled sin.

He sets the sin-sick prisoners of sin free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me.

[17 : 38] Yet even with that, the battle rages on. It rages in our lives. Let's be honest.

If not with anybody else, with the Lord and with ourselves, the battle rages in this very sanctuary this morning. In the hearts and lives of folks who are dealing with habits and struggles and attention that's somewhat indescribable.

I would not doubt that someone here this morning needs Christ.

Maybe you've never surrendered your life to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But when you're honest about it, you're too proud to admit it. You're too temporarily satisfied to surrender.

You're too uncertain about what all that means to do it. There's a great possibility that someone here needs Jesus this morning and will walk out of here without him, knowing the whole time that he or she needs the Lord.

[19 : 01] but too proud, too caught up, too uncertain. That's part of that battle.

It's a battle for the souls of men and women and boys and girls. It's a battle, friend. When we become aware of our sinful state, when we know in our heart where we are with God, I want you to understand that comes from God.

That don't come from us. That comes from God making us aware of those things. That kind of sensitivity is not innate within us. Scripture says that we are dead in our sins with no sense of our need for God unless Christ makes us aware.

And to the one that is aware today and needs to come to Christ, but by coming, it seems too much of a stretch.

And by not coming, you put your life in your hands. It's like pulling a pin of a hand grenade and waiting before you let it go off.

[20 : 21] And I don't know how long that takes, but I know I don't want to do it. I know I don't want to take a chance like that. So let me tell you this morning, if you are without Christ, if there's never been a time in your life when you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life and to cleanse you and to change you from this day forward, you are in a fight.

The struggle that you feel this morning, the pressure that you feel is a fight. And the devil will try his best to put a spiritual chokehold on you and keep you from doing what God would have you do.

God will bruise His head on your behalf, but you have to surrender your life to Him. Not to the evil one applying the pressure, but surrender your life to God, providing the victory for even more of us.

There are Christians in this room that are still bogged down doing what you don't want to do. And I want you to know today by the power of the Spirit of God and because of the blood of Christ that was shed for you and because of your commitment to follow Him, God will provide you victory over the habits of sin that so plague your life.

Walk away from them today. You can. I promise you can. You can walk away from it. Be clear. It's a war.

[22 : 07] And it's real. The war that we can't see is larger than the one that we can. With all the havoc that's happening in this world. With all the havoc that's happening in this country.

With all the havoc that may be happening in your home. With all of that, what's even more real than any of that is the war that we cannot see. It is a war and it is a real one and it is declared here.

However, it is a war that was won on Calvary. Thank God we can be victorious today. We can be victorious every day until Christ comes.

Don't let the floppy bottle of a headless serpent scare you. There's no need for it to. Jesus is the anti-venom for the serpent's bite.

You put your life in the Lord's hands and you walk out of here free today. Strengthened only by the Spirit of God. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want you to be real with God.

[23 : 16] You don't have to be real with me, but you need to be real with God. You need to really see what God's showing you this morning. If you're here this morning and you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, never asked Him to forgive you of your sins, to come into your life and save you, I want you to know today is the day of salvation.

That everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And the only reason you sense that need is because God is drawing you. Now I promise you there's a tension there.

There may be a struggle there. That's the war, folks. That's the battle that we're in the midst of. You take that first step.

As soon as we stand and sing in just a moment, you take that first step. And I promise you it gets easier with every other step. You just follow the Lord. Just give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus today.

Maybe you're here and you know that you have done that. You nailed that down. Your life is in the Lord's hands. But you've never told anybody. You've never publicly acknowledged that.

[24 : 25] And Jesus, by His commission and by His example, shows us that baptism is the way to let others know about that. God, I want to encourage you to make what's private in your life public today.

To honor the Lord in that way. Maybe God is drawing you to be a part of this church. You have joined us for a part of this journey and you feel drawn here to be a part of it.

I want to encourage you to just follow the Lord. We'd love to guide you in that process. You come. For the most of us, the reality is, there's a battle raging within us.

One that we've paid too much attention to. And at the same time, one we've let go too much. Today, will you lay that before the Lord?

Will you claim His promise that He gives us the strength to walk away from it? Lord, these steps and this stage is an altar for us to lay it down before the Lord.

[25 : 28] You can do it here. You can do it where you are. I just encourage you not to just sing through this song and ignore what God's doing in your heart and life today. You obey Him as He speaks. Lord Jesus, I pray that if there's any hindrance in this place, any misunderstanding about the message, dear God, Lord, will you clarify all that?

God, if there's any barrier, will you remove it, dear Father? Will you help us to walk in the way that you would have us to go, dear God? Lord, may we honor you by simply being obedient and following you today.

Whatever other voices that we hear, whatever other feelings that we feel, God, help us to ignore them and just follow your lead as you speak to our hearts and lives.

We love you, Lord. We surrender to you. Have your will and your way in our midst right now. In Jesus' precious name, amen.